

A GRIM PREDICTION:

'I'll never reach my 30th birthday'

JEANNE CORDOVA

Joe Tommasi was supposed to call Friday morning, Aug. 15 to check final details on our interview of Aug. 1. Ironically, he had answered most of my questions in a phone conversation two days before and all I had to ask him was his age.

A 2 p.m. Aug. 15, a friend of

Joe's called and told me Joseph Charles Tommasi was 24 and he was dead.

The NSLF leader was gunned down on the front steps of the headquarters of the National Socialist White People's Party, an organization he had built and once led.

(The NSWPP was founded in

1959 by George Lincoln Rockwell, and had been known as The American Nazi Party until its name was changed in 1967.)

Eyewitnesses report the fatal shooting was done by Jerry Jones, an 18-year-old probationary member of the NSWPP who was standing guard duty at the 4375 N. Peck Road location.

Angered By Insult

According to witness David Rust, he and Tommasi were out buying auto parts when the incident occurred. They were driving south on Peck past the NSWPP headquarters when Clyde Bingham, 19-year-old NSWPP member who was standing guard at the door, "flipped Joe the finger." Angered by the insult, Tommasi stopped the car and charged through the gate toward Bingham shouting, "Come and say that to my face you..."

Rust had also left the car and approached the NSWPP compound gate steps behind Tommasi but "stopped where I was" when he saw Bingham and Jones (who was also standing guard) draw their guns. (NSWPP spokespersons later confirmed their guards were routinely armed.)

According to Rust, Jones twice told Tommasi to get off the premises. "He (Jones) kept shouting, 'I've got orders to keep you off the property!'" As Tommasi approached and "pushed" Bingham, Bingham returned his gun to his holster and Jones shot Tommasi in the head. Police later confirmed Tommasi was killed with a .45 revolver.

Three youngsters passing on bicycles and "a man across the street" apparently witnessed all or part of the incident. They and Rust were questioned by police. NSWPP Captain Dan Stewart and Gregg Hubbard, another member on duty in the headquarters, were also questioned and later released.

At their Saturday press conference, NSWPP spokesperson Martin Kerr said, "Joe Tommasi got exactly what he deserved... his death is the

result of two years of effort by Tommasi to destroy the White People's Party." (Tommasi was expelled from the NSWPP in September 1973). NSWPP national headquarters in Arlington, Va., are claiming Jones and Bingham acted in self-defense. "These two men... are guilty of no crime other than the 'crime' of trying to protect their lives and Party property."

Hours after the shooting, Kerr alleged that Tommasi was trying to enter their headquarters, but Rust claims his leader was unarmed and shot before reaching the steps of the building.

Police report finding a large stick next to Tommasi's body; however, NSLF member John Duffy claims the stick "was planted" by NSWPP members to make the shooting look like self-defense. El Monte Police Capt. Wiles said investigators had not yet established whether Tommasi was armed but said that claim seemed "negative." Duffy later maintained he had known and lived with his former leader for several months and had never known Tommasi to carry "any weapon... not even a knife."

Duffy likened Tommasi's death to the assassination of George L. Rockwell (Aug. 25, 1967) and accused NSWPP of engineering his leader's death. "We know Joe was on their (national NSWPP) list since he was expelled. We know Dan Stewart had issued orders recently that if Capt. Tommasi showed up within the perimeter of the yard... he was to be shot, and shoot to kill."

Death Predicted

That Joseph Charles Tommasi is dead at 24 is probably of little surprise to those who knew him closely. That the Nazi met his death at the gunpoint of the NSWPP is also not surprising. Speaking of his semi-underground life two weeks ago, Tommasi prophesied, "Hell... I don't know if I'll reach my 30th birthday." Meeting in a little-known El Monte restaurant, he seemed far more apprehensive than he had been during our February interviews.

Declining to come to the *Free Press* offices because he feared "political enemies," he directed his innuendos more it seemed to right-wing rather than leftist foes. Although he was seldom specific, constant references to "hassles" with his former organization indicated his continual concern with the long-running feud he alternately fueled and tried to quell.

In February, Tommasi led a NSLF raiding party to the NSWPP headquarters on Peck Rd. and, in Tommasi's words, "beat the shit out of" everyone they found at the location. Since that time members of both groups had clashed on an individual basis, NSWPP was always afraid Tommasi was out to destroy or regain control; Tommasi apparently was unwilling or unable to turn his personal attentions away from his mother organization.

'Politically Dead'

In our interviews, Tommasi never indicated any desire to regain power in NSWPP, but he lost few opportunities to point out their political "errors." Politically and personally, he saw them as a "politically dead... paper... organization."

Duffy denied Tommasi was looking for a way back into the organization but confirmed his leader was always "very hurt" by the unresolved conflict. "Joe would never have left the NSLF, but we wanted to come to an understanding with them (NSWPP). He wrote Cmdr. Koehl several times... I think he really wanted NSLF to be some kind of militant arm to them."

Asked why Tommasi disregarded the drawn guns in his attempt to settle with Bingham, Rust was perplexed. "It (Bingham's insult) seemed to get to Joe personally... I don't know... Joe never was afraid of guns..." Rust explained that a similar incident between Bingham and Tommasi had taken place months before and speculated the antagonism annoyed his former leader personally because it came from

(please turn to page 13)

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In Memoriam

Captain Joseph Charles Tommasi

1951-August 15, 1975

At 1 p.m. at the National Socialist White People's Party headquarters, Captain Joseph C. Tommasi, leader of the National Socialist Liberation Front, was martyred by a cowardly yes man of NSWPP bureaucracy.

The bullet that martyred our leader was not aimed at the Captain but at the very heart of the revolutionary movement that was his life's work. Words can never replace but only emulate the revolutionary racial idealist dedication that burned inside Joseph Tommasi the man, the fighter and the leader.

The bright flame that flared in the soul of Joseph Tommasi, that shines in the hearts of his adherents, will never be extinguished. A thousand reactionary bullets can never stop the dedication of the NSLF to the coming armed struggle.

Ironically, Captain Tommasi was martyred almost eight years to the day that Commander George Lincoln Rockwell was taken from our midst. Both cut down by "national socialists." Both for their steadfast hatred of the reactionary

interference that undermines the national socialist revolution.

Let the fire and power of Captain Tommasi breathe into our souls and find expression in the destruction of his enemies. The bricks and mortar of the movement are the blood and bones of its martyrs. Tragically, this afternoon, another brick was laid. And so we, the living followers of Captain Tommasi, must attempt to pick up the pieces and continue to build on the dreams he harbored within him...

Lieutenant David Rust, chosen successor to Captain Tommasi, has taken over command of NSLF operations. We must all at this time give our maximum support to Lt. Rust, to insure the survival of NSLF, and not to allow the Captain to have died in vain. We must all pull together out of love, dedication and respect. He who may have wavered in the past must now rededicate his efforts to the struggle. We will build his organization into a living and breathing incarnation of our fallen Captain.

—The NSLF Eulogy